Research Article

Extent of Application of Office Records Management Competencies in Anambra State Civil Service for Effective Records Management

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Abstract: The study ascertained the extent of application of office records management competencies by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service for effective records management. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 289 secretaries in ministries and non-ministerial departments in Anambra State. The entire population was studied without sampling because the size was not too large. The instrument for data collection was a five-point rating questionnaire which contained 26-items in two clusters. The instrument was validated by three experts. To determine the internal consistency, Cronbach Alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument and an overall co-efficient value of 0.87 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that respondents' rated physical filling competencies to a moderate extent, while cloud computing competencies to a low extent. Gender did not significantly influence the respondents' mean ratings on the extent physical filling and cloud computing competencies were applied by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service. Based on the findings, it was concluded that, the extent secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service applied physical filling and cloud computing competencies was not encouraging. It was, therefore recommended among others that, secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service should be retrained by their ministries, through in-service training, workshops, seminars and conferences to enable them update their office record management competencies for effective records management.
Keywords: Application, Office Records, Management, Competencies.

Introduction

In developed nations, the emphasis today is on modern offices often described as the electronic, paper-less or virtual office. Office is categorized into traditional office, transition office and electronic or virtual office (International Records Management Trust, 2009). The traditional office is an office that is devoid of computers and modern information technology tools. The transition office is the office that is in-between the traditional office and the electronic office in terms of technological applications. Although the transition office is primarily traditional, it may contain some features of the electronic office. Most Nigeria offices are transition offices. That is, they are not yet fully computerized, and at the same time, they are not purely traditional. For example, there may be a computer for word processing tasks, but the filling systems may be based on old technologies. Transition offices combine both the old and new technologies, procedures and systems in their operation (Onifade, 2010). The electronic office is an office which functions or services are computerized. This is why the workers have work stations with computer and full information technology (IT) facilities. In the electronic office, more of soft copies of records rather than hard

copies are used. This is in line with the Freedom Information Act (FOIA) of 2007 which allowed public access to records and information, therein.

According to Freedom Information Act (FOIA) (2007), there is great need to project public records and information to the extent that it is consistent with public interest and the protection of personal privacy, project serving public officers from adverse consequences for disclosing certain kinds of official records of information without authorization and in establishing the procedures for the achievement of those purposes and related purposes thereof. No wonder Oguejiofor and Ile (2015), opined that passage of the Freedom Information Act is a victory for Nigeria democracy. Igbokwe-Ibeto (2013) remarked that the purpose of Freedom Information Act embraces the genuine need for accurate and adequate record keeping and management so as to increase the availability of public records and information to the citizenry in furtherance to a better administration of organizations. This implies that transparency and accountability can be achieved by giving the public the right of access to information, and this can only be actualized through accessibility of accurate office records management.

Office records management refer to a system through which organizations fully monitor the movement of records with their organizational structures and thus ensure accountability, transparency and good governance. To Oguejiofor (2015), office records management is that part of office management which deals with the classification, arrangement and storage of business records so that they may be quickly located when required. Records management therefore, involves the effective, efficient and systematic control of the processes of creating, receiving, maintaining and disposing valuable information for optimum accessibility.

Akor and Udensi (2013) stated that records management include activities such as setting polices and standards; assigning responsibilities and authorities; establishing and promulgating procedures and guidelines; providing a range of services relating to the management and use of records, and designing, implementing and administering specialized systems for managing records. With the above definition, records should be kept for the purposes of documenting evidence of every significant activity undertaken in an organization to ensure a smooth connection between the past, present and future operations of the system.

In organizations, secretaries are often the people trained to keep records. Secretaries are office workers needed in various types of business organizations to assist their employers or supervisors in achieving organizational goals or objectives. The office of today requires secretaries who are capable of displaying initiatives, exercising good judgment and making good decision within the scope of authorities given to them. Qualified secretaries possess knowledge of business, personnel, management, information and communication technology (ICT) and knowledge of the functions of all departments within an organization (Onifade, 2010).

Secretaries perform a lot of functions or duties, which include managing office records, which are one of the traditional modules in office education (Olayanju and Asogwa, 2010). According to Akor and Udensi (2013), functions of secretaries include testing storage media, providing proper storage equipment and supplies, outlining procedure for filling, developing an efficient retrieval of procedure, setting up a schedule for when records should be kept or discarded. Okwuanaso and Agbamu (2010) opined that ability, capabilities and capacities to use modern information and communication technologies are some of the competencies needed in today's secretarial duties.

Competency is the ability of secretaries to apply office records management skills for effective keeping of files or documents in organizations. Kahirol, Muhammed and Nor (2017) noted that competency is the ability to do something well when measured against standards especially abilities acquired through experiences or training. Competence can occur in any period of a person's life or at any stage of one's career. Employers use competency to help define what secretaries should do to

meet the needs of their role. Oguejiofor and Ile (2015) identified use of physical filling, records life cycle, and computer assisted retrieval (CAR) as the areas in record management where the competencies of civil servants need to be applied. Kibe (2016) noted that the use of cloud computing services and e-mail record management are competencies secretaries need to apply in record management. Thus, this study covered physical filling and cloud computing competencies which seen as the most important areas of office record management needed for secretaries of organizations by effective and efficient delivery of duties.

Physical filling refers to physical placement of documents and papers in acceptable containers according to some predetermined arrangements so that any of the records may be located quickly and conveniently when required. Competency in physical filling entails abilities to locate records and retrieve records in a reliable and timely fashion to meet the needs of users (Ohakwe, 2012). It also include abilities to file and locate systems with documented policies, use the finding aids such a indexes, use subject matter lists to meet freedom of information law (foil) required, and use filling equipment appropriately.

According to Oguejiofor (2015), files are marked 'B.U' when information in file is required to be produced on a specific future date; when a reply to an outgoing letter is required; when a file should be submitted to an office on return from leave or tour; and when action will be required at a future date for example the submission of a report or financial returns. Oguejiofor stated that physical filling competencies which are Document Direction (B.U) and Keep in View (KIV) management competencies include ability to label files in sequence, access dip system files, access diary system files, access tickler card system files and among others.

Competency in physical filling further includes microfilming competency such as ability to select appropriate micrographics technique in coding, storing, destroying, retaining, transforming and copying documents, access files with appropriate techniques, organize files with the use of computers, and save, code, index and retrieve documents on disks, microfilms and other organic media. Ohakwe (2012) reported that secretaries should be highly competent in locating and retrieving records in a reliable fashion to meet the needs of users and organizations.

In addition, Seniwoliba, Mahama and Abilla (2017) disclosed that secretaries fail to keep proper office records because they possess inadequate office records management skills and are also ignorant of their responsibilities. In support, Akor and Udensi (2014) reported that organizations' records are not properly kept as a result of insufficient filling skilled secretaries and lack of experienced record management secretaries.

Cloud computing refers to services in the cloud that provides computation, software, data access and storage. Cloud computing is the practice of using internet-based servers to store, manage and process records throughout their lifecycle (Bryan, 2020). According to Kibe (2016), cloud computing competencies include abilities to create files using instant messaging services, store files using Dropbox and Google Drive, mark files for destruction in the cloud, use cloud archiving applications such as Mimecast cloud, Microsoft exchange online platform to safely and securely store data. Wamuyu (2017) revealed that cloud computing service application rely on access to the internet which is one of the biggest challenges faced by business organizations in record management in Africa. To Yordanova, Yordanova and Yordanova (2015) disclosed that secretaries are not families with the use of cloud computing technology for enhancing record keeping.

Kibe (2014) stated that despite the fact that cloud-based services have the potential of increasing efficiency and effectiveness of public organizations through effective records management, the level of adoption of cloud-based services by public organization is low. Nakpodia (2011) reported that secretaries, irrespective of their gender and work, are required to possess and apply records

management competencies in order to cope with the increasing use of ICT to create and maintain records in private and public organizations.

The influencing factor on office records management competencies can be gender. Gender could be a factor within the context of office records management competencies applied by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service. Gender refers to the sex of an individual either male or female. According to Oguejiofor and Ile (2015), gender relates to the difference in sex (that is, either male or female) and how this quality affects people's dispositions and perception toward the application of office records management competencies. Igbinedion (2010) argued that some office records management competencies are gender sensitive and may influence the use of such skills by male and female in various organizations, while a number of these competencies are masculine in nature, others are feminine. Oguejiofor and Ile (2015) noted that because of the strenuous nature of some competencies, female secretaries find it difficult to cope with the tasks involved in managing records in the office. Consequently, Seniwoliba, Mahama and Abilla (2017) disclosed that personnel (secretaries) do not seem to keep proper office records because most of them appear not to adequately apply office records management skills and therefore are ignorant of their responsibilities.

Similarly, a personal observation in Anambra State Civil Services shows that records seem not to be managed properly. This could be attributed to poor application of record management competencies by office secretaries who are saddled with the responsibilities of keeping organizations' office records. Thus, inadequate application of office records management competencies by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service could make it difficult for users to retrieve records or data from records departments when they are in need of such.

Statement of the Problem
In the Anambra State Civil Service, office records management tasks have been so discouraging. People are often seen walking hysterically within and around the offices in frustration looking for one document or the other. These have made employees, and even retirees to waste so much time, waiting for their documents or files to be retrieved before being paid or getting their benefits. The consequences of not finding these documents include payroll disputes, delays in payment for both employees and retirees, manipulation of pension scheme, waste of administrative man-hour and wasteful years for these people. There are also situations where trained secretaries in the Nigerian public and private sectors cannot acquire, create and maintain records due to poor application of office records management competencies. This is worrisome because secretaries are the people trained in the management of records and should apply relevant competencies in the discharge of their duties. There is however need to ascertain the level of application of office records management competencies by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service for effective records management.

Purpose of the Study
The main purpose of this study was to determine the extent of application of office records management competencies by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service for effective records management. Specifically, the study determined the extent:
1) Physical filling competencies are applied by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service for effective records management.
2) Cloud computing competencies are applied by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service for effective records management.

Research Questions
The following research questions guided the study:
1) To what extent are physical filling competencies applied by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service for effective records management?

2) To what extent are cloud computing competencies applied by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service for effective records management?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1) There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service on the extent they apply physical filling competencies for effective records management.

2) There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service on the extent they apply cloud computing competencies for effective records management.

Method

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 289 secretaries, (made up of 97 males and 192 females) in all the ministries and non-ministerial department in Anambra State. Data were collected using a 26 items structured questionnaire. The structured questionnaire was validated by three experts-two in business education and one in measurement and evaluation all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Their comments enhanced the content validity of the instrument. To establish the internal consistency of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted. Data collected in the pilot test were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha to determine the internal consistency.

Reliability coefficients values of 0.87 and 0.86 for clusters B1 and B2 respectively with an overall coefficient value of 0.87. Out of 289 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents in their offices through direct approach which facilitated quick response rate, 285 copies (representing 99 percent) were retrieved with an attrition rate of four copies (representing 1 percent) and used for data analysis. Data collected regarding the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

In order to determine the extent of application of office records management competencies by secretaries, a decision rule based on real limit of numbers was used such that ratings between 4.50-5.00 were regarded as very high extent, items with mean ratings of 3.50-4.49 were considered as high extent; items with mean ratings of 2.50-3.49 were considered as moderate extent. Furthermore, items with mean ratings of 1.50-2.49 and 1.00-1.49 were considered as low extent and very low extent respectively. In testing the null hypotheses, where the calculated p-value is less than the stipulated level of significance (0.05), it meant that there was a significant difference and the null hypothesis was rejected. Conversely, where the calculated p-value is greater than or equal to the stipulated level of significance (0.05), it meant that there was no significant difference and the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Results

Research Question 1

To what extent are physical filling competencies applied by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service for effective records management?

Data in Table 1 show the cluster mean score of 2.91 and the standard deviation score of 1.00. This is an indication that the extent to which secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service apply physical filling competencies for effective records management is moderate. The item by item analysis shows that out of 15 items listed on physical filling competencies, secretaries apply are item with a mean score of 3.56 to a high extent. Eleven of the items are applied to moderate extent with mean scores ranging from 2.81 to 3.31, while the remaining three items are applied to a low extent with mean scores ranging from 2.38 to 2.44. The standard deviations for all the items range from 0.77 to 1.31, indicating that the respondents are not wide apart in their rating.

Table 1. Respondents' mean ratings of on the extent physical filling competencies are applied by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service for effective records management (N = 285)

S/N	Items on physical filling competencies	X̄	SD	Remarks
1	Process requests for files and/or information from the files	3.13	1.31	Moderate Extent
2	Arrange files in various documents	3.56	0.96	High Extent
3	Organize important files to enable easy sift through folders to find documents when needed	2.94	0.77	Moderate Extent
4	Secure files	3.31	1.20	Moderate Extent
5	Retain, transfer and destroy records in accordance with established regulations and supervisory guidance	2.81	0.91	Moderate Extent
6	Create a new file	2.88	1.20	Moderate Extent
7	Index a record	2.81	0.91	Moderate Extent
8	Code a record	2.38	0.81	Low Extent
9	Identify storage period	2.88	0.96	Moderate Extent
10	Developing documents to serve as payment records	3.19	0.83	Moderate Extent
11	Reducing exact image in documents	2.38	1.09	Low Extent
12	Passwording store document to protect data from unauthorized access	2.94	0.85	Moderate Extent
13	Knowledge to apply electronic referencing	2.81	0.98	Moderate Extent
14	Scanning and digitizing microfilmed images	2.44	1.03	Low Extent
15	Enlarging the document to a readable size	3.25	1.06	Moderate Extent
	Cluster Mean	**2.91**		**Moderate Extent**

Research Question 2

To what extent are cloud computing competencies applied by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service for effective records management?

Table 2. Respondents' mean ratings of on the extent cloud computing competencies are applied by secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service for effective records management (N=285)

S/N	Items on cloud computing competencies	X̄	SD	Remarks
16	Safely and securely store files using Mimecast cloud archiving	1.42	0.85	Very Low Extent
17	Safely and securely store files using Micro exchange online	1.45	0.79	Very Low Extent
18	Share files using instant messaging services	3.53	1.15	High Extent
19	Lock down files for viewing only	1.41	0.98	Very Low Extent
20	Create files using Google docs	1.46	0.84	Very Low Extent
21	Maintain privacy and/or confidentiality of files	2.40	0.80	Very Low Extent
22	Delete files according to the retention/ disposition schedule	2.68	0.89	Moderate Extent
23	Retrieve files from the cloud without damage to the authenticity and integrity of this record	2.44	0.89	Low Extent
24	Store files using Dropbox and Google Drive	2.14	0.96	Low Extent
25	Classify files stored in the clouds	2.19	0.83	Moderate Extent
26	Mark files for destruction in the cloud	2.59	0.95	Moderate Extent
	Cluster Mean	**2.19**		**Low Extent**

Data in Table 2 show the cluster mean score of 2.19 and the standard deviation score of 0.91 which means that secretaries apply cloud computing competencies in Anambra State Civil Service for effective records management is to a low extent. The analysis of the items shows that out of the 11 cloud computing competencies listed, secretaries indicate that they apply item number 18 to a high extent with a mean score of 3.53. Three items (22, 25 and 26) are applied to a moderate extent, items number 23 and 24 are applied to a low extent while the remaining five (16, 17, 19, 20 and 21) items are applied to very low extent by the secretaries. The standard deviations for all the items range from 0.76 to 1.15, indicating that the respondents are not wide apart in their rating.

Test of Hypotheses
The null hypotheses formulated for the study are tested in this section. The t-test is used to test the two hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1
There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service on the extent they apply physical filling competencies for effective records management.

Table 3. Summary of t-test analysis of male and female secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service on the extent they apply physical filling competencies for effective records management

Gender	N	X̄	SD	α	df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Male	96	3.12	.15	0.05	283	0.86	.040	Not Significant
Female	189	3.10	.10					

Table 3 indicates that the calculated t-value is 0.86 at 283 degree of freedom and .040 p-value. Since the p-value of .040 is greater than the alpha value (0.05), it means that male and female secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service do not significantly differ in their mean ratings on the extent they apply physical filling competencies for effective records management. The null hypothesis is, therefore not rejected.

Hypothesis 2
There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service on the extent they apply cloud computing competencies for effective records management.

Table 4. Summary of t-test analysis of male and female secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service on the extent they apply cloud computing competencies for effective records management

Gender	N	X̄	SD	α	df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Male	96	3.10	.18	0.05	283	1.46	.043	Not Significant
Female	189	3.06	.15					

Table 4 indicates that the calculated t-value is 1.46 at 283 degree of freedom and .043 p-value. Since the p-value of .043 is greater than the alpha value (0.05), it means that male and female secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service do not significantly differ in their mean ratings on the extent they apply cloud computing competencies for effective records management. The null hypothesis is, therefore not rejected.

Discussion of Findings
The findings of the first research question revealed that secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service apply physical filling competencies for effective records management to a moderate extent. This is surprising considering the importance of the application of physical filling competencies to the

efficiency of organizations and the repeated calls by Ohakwe (2012) that secretaries should be highly competent in locating and retrieving records in a reliable and timely fashion to meet the needs of users and organizations. This finding agrees with Seniwoliba, Mahama and Abilla (2017) who disclosed that secretaries did not keep proper office records because they do not possess adequate office records management skills and are also ignorant of their responsibilities. In support, Akor and Udensi (2014) reported that organizations' records are not properly kept as a result of insufficient filling skilled secretaries and lack of experienced record management secretaries.

The result of the first hypothesis showed that gender did not significantly influence responses on the extent they applied physical filling competencies for effective records management. This finding disagrees with the findings of Igbinedion (2010) which revealed that some office records management competencies are gender sensitive and may influence the use of such skills by male and female in various organizations, since a number of these competencies are masculine in nature, others are feminine. In support, Oguejiofor and Ile (2015) noted that because of the strenuous nature in the use of some competencies, female secretaries find it difficult to cope with the tasks involved in managing records in offices.

The findings of the second research question revealed that secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service applied cloud computing competencies for effective records management to a low extent. The findings are in agreement with the finding of Kibe (2016) which stated that despite the fact that cloud-based services have the potential of increasing efficiency and effectiveness of public organizations through effective records management, the level of adoption of cloud-based services by public organization is low. The findings of this study are in agreement with the findings of Yordanova, Yordanova and Yordanova (2015) who disclosed that secretaries are not families with the use of cloud computing technology for enhancing record keeping.

The result of the second hypothesis showed that gender did not significantly influence respondents' mean ratings on the extent they applied cloud computing competencies. This finding disagrees with the findings of Nakpodia (2011) who reported that secretaries, irrespective of their gender and work experiences are required to possess and apply records management competencies in order to cope with the increasing use of ICT to create and maintain records in private and public organizations.

Conclusion
Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the extent secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service apply physical filling and cloud computing competencies for effective records management was not encouraging since it is rated moderate to low extent. These have made employees, and even retirees to waste so much time, waiting for their documents or files to be retrieved before being paid or getting their benefits. The consequences of not finding these documents include payroll disputes, delays in payment for both employees and retirees, manipulation of pension scheme, waste of administrative man-hour and wasteful years for these people.

Recommendations
Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:
1) Secretaries in Anambra State Civil Service should be retrained by their ministries, through in-service training, workshops, seminars and conferences to enable them update their office record management competencies for effective records management.
2) Practicing secretaries should attend refresher courses in the field of record management to acquire more knowledge and be competent so as to carry out their professional functions effectively.

Declarations
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Conflict of interest: The Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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